The Role of the Artist Interview in Co-Creation Projects: a Continuation of Co-creation?

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Abstract

This paper examines how artist interviews can support and sustain the goals of co-creation in contemporary museum practice. Taking the Jacob Geel Project in Amsterdam as a case study, it explores how interviews with artists, residents, and museum professionals can help preserve both tangible and intangible outcomes of co-created projects. These outcomes were evaluated through the lens of the Amsterdam Museum's four core co-creation values: equity, reciprocity, empowerment, and belonging. The paper also considers whether existing literature on artist interviews and oral history reflects these values. Findings indicate that reflective, dialogic interviews enrich understanding of diverse perspectives while shaping future strategies for acquisition, care, and display. Far from being merely evaluative, the interview emerges as a co-creative tool in itself—one that reveals intentions, fosters dialogue, and actively contributes to shaping the future of co-created outcomes. As such, it should be seen as an essential, forward-looking component of the co-creation process.

Introduction[1]

In 2020, the Amsterdam Museum initiated a co-creation project with residents from the Jacob Geel neighbourhood, in the Western part of Amsterdam. This area, originally characterised by social housing apartments, has undergone significant transformation. The social housing was slated for replacement by new apartment complexes with considerably higher rents, potentially forcing residents to relocate to other parts of the city. Since a shortage of affordable housing and gentrification have severely increased in Amsterdam during the past decade, the project's central objective was to focus on the narratives of residents on the brink of losing their homes. Some residents were relocated in (renovated) apartments in the immediate neighbourhood, while others found a new home somewhere else in Amsterdam, but the local community as it was, would disappear. Through co-creations between artists and residents, stories and objects about their life in the neighbourhood were produced and presented in an exhibition in the neighbourhood in 2021, and secondly, at the Amsterdam Museum in 2022.

As a museum professional specialised in collections management, I am particularly interested in how the Amsterdam Museum engages with the preservation of material and immaterial results of co-creation initiatives and the positionality of the co-creation stakeholders, i.e., the artists and residents involved, as well as of museum staff. In reflecting on and advancing the processes of this co-creation project —both by analysing its outcomes and envisioning its future— I argue it is essential to adopt methodologies that uphold the project's co-creative spirit. This consideration resulted in two interrelated questions. First, in what ways does the act of conducting interviews contribute to and sustain the co-creative aims of the project? Second, how can artist interviews promote a more layered understanding of the project's outcomes while enhancing future accessibility, ownership, preservation, and conservation of the produced objects and narratives?

To gain an understanding of the perspectives of different stakeholders, I have conducted interviews with residents, artists and museum workers involved in this project. Reflecting on the successive stages of the project in interviews, I believe, can yield valuable insights for the design of future co-creation projects (Nikkessen et al. 2022; Rausch et al. 2022; Simon 2010). It may offer a more nuanced understanding of the thoughts and aspirations of the Jacob Geel co-creators concerning their engagement in the project and its tangible and intangible outcomes. For instance, regarding to what co-creators identify as crucial in preserving their objects and stories

as part of the city's collective narrative. These reflections can then serve as a starting point for discussions on decisions in regard to acquisition, presentation, care, and conservation.

The publication *The Artist Interview* (Beerkens et al. 2012), initially designed for in-depth interviews with artists focusing on the meaning, materiality, and evolution of their work, has served as a guide for interviewing the co-creation makers. The results were analysed in relation to theories on artist interviews and closely related elements of oral history interviews as discussed in Farinati (2024) and Stigter (2016; 2024). Given that the Jacob Geel project is part of the ongoing Collecting the City program, I have focused my inquiry on four core values as employed by the Amsterdam Museum for co-creation methods: equity, reciprocity, empowerment, and belonging. Although these values may not apply universally to every co-creation project or stakeholder, they provide a meaningful framework for assessing whether the museum's objectives resonate with the participants' experiences.

This paper begins with a concise description of the Jacob Geel Project, followed by an outline of the four core values of co-creation employed by the Amsterdam Museum. It then explores the use of the artist interview methodology to assess whether it can help sustain the project's co-creative character, using the Jacob Geel Project as a case study. The second half of the paper discusses how questions derived from the Artist Interview provided insights into stakeholders' perceptions of the project's various phases, with particular attention to their visions for the future of their co-creations.

The Jacob Geel Project

The Jacob Geel project is part of the Amsterdam Museum's 'Collecting the City' program line, through which the museum aims to explore and collect underexposed stories of the city of and with city communities (Nikkessen, 8). As part of this project, the museum invited storytelling coach and photographer Fouad Lakbir to engage with residents of the Jacob Geel neighbourhood. Together with radio- and podcast maker/illustrator Jesper Buursink, he began building relationships with a wide range of residents to co-create and document their experiences and perspectives as they faced relocation due to urban redevelopment. Some residents became active members of the project team, while others contributed more independently. Over the course of several months, a rich collection of stories emerged through conversations, audio recordings, and the (co-)creation of meaningful objects that reflected personal memories and connections to the neighbourhood. The results offer an intimate view of the area's significance to its residents.

From collecting favourite recipes, to recording conversations at the local hairdresser, to jointly drawing while discussing the neighbourhood with a mother and her two children: the outcomes were diverse and deeply personal. The photographs in this paper represent only a small selection of what was co-created.

These works were presented in a temporary 'Jacob Geel Museum' route, developed in collaboration with artists from Moving Art Projects (MAP), and installed in and around the soon-to-be-demolished housing block in the Hemsterhuisstraat (Figure 1). Visitors were invited to not only see and listen, but also to contribute their own reflections. Key objects, audio fragments, and some building elements from this installation were featured in *The Jacob Geel Chronicles*, a smaller exhibition at the Amsterdam Museum, co-curated by residents, artists, and museum staff (Figure 2).[2]



Figure 1. *Entrance of the Jacob Geel Museum in the neigbourhood:* Amsterdam, April 2021. Photograph by: Noud Verhave, MAP Moving Art Projects.



Figure 2. *Jacob Geel Exhibition in the Amsterdam Museum, tour with and by co-creators in the Amsterdam Museum:* Amsterdam, June 2022. Photograph by: Amsterdam Museum.

Values of Co-creation in the Amsterdam Museum

When reflecting on the outcomes of the project, several key questions emerge: To what extent are the co-creation values embraced by the Amsterdam Museum visible in the outcomes of the project? How might these values be further strengthened in future phases of co-creation initiatives? And is it possible to implement a method that inherently embodies these co-creative values? Before exploring these questions, a brief description of the four core values of co-creation, as defined by the Amsterdam Museum, are briefly outlined below:

> **'Equity'**: Co-creation is based on equitable collaboration, ensuring that all parties have an equal voice in decision-making. Shared creative leadership makes both partners and residents co-owners of the content.

> **'Empowerment'**: projects are driven by empowering co-workers as equals, enabling them to make decisions as a community, retain control over their own narratives, and creating opportunities to express this agency.

> **'Belonging':** Co-creation seeks to foster a sense of belonging by ensuring that every voice is heard. Through involvement and ownership, partners and residents become part of a larger whole.
>
> **'Reciprocity':** Co-creation depends on mutual exchange, where all parties both contribute and benefit. Identifying each other's needs and offerings is the first step, with balanced give-and-take kept central throughout the process (Nikkessen 2022, p. 10).

Co-creation can take many forms and engages a diversity of people: *"Every partner and resident differs, and therefore every working method is different. Nevertheless, all projects are based on the same four core values, which together comprise the Amsterdam Museum's co-creation method." (Nikkessen, 9).*

Co-creative Values in Interviewing

In museum practice, interviews with artists play a crucial role in providing insights into meanings, materiality, presentation, and future life of artworks. These interviews can be conducted at various stages, including acquisition, exhibition preparation, or when conservation issues arise. Engaging with co-makers —such as technicians— and former owners or conservators can also enhance understanding, particularly when direct communication with the artist is no longer possible. Depending on the context, various terms are used for these interviews. The term 'artwork interview' refers to interviews focused on a specific artwork; 'collection interview' applies when several works within a particular context are examined; and 'stakeholder interview' is used when individuals with a personal or professional relationship to artworks or heritage are interviewed (Stigter 2024, 65). In this research, the term 'artist interview' is used when referring to the general method and theoretical approach. In the context of this co-creation project, I will use the term 'co-creator interview' to better reflect the diversity of participants—each playing a different role in the creation of the project, the presentations, and (partly) the objects. To distinguish between the co-creators, I will group them as: artists (though many refer to themselves as 'makers'), residents, and museum staff.

The publication *The Artist Interview: For Conservation and Presentation of Contemporary Art* (Beerkens 2012) is widely used by museum professionals. The questions it outlines have served as a starting point and best-practice framework for conducting effective interviews. The publication emphasises dialogue as a joint exploration of artist and interviewer on

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"*what is meaningful in the work*" (Beerkens 2012, 15). It acknowledges that interviews are not neutral: both interviewee and interviewer shape the outcome, and the values of other stakeholders must also be taken into account.

In particular longer interviews with artists or stakeholders often bear similarities with oral history interviews (Van Schaik 2023, 3). As Lynn Abrams (2016, 3) states in *Oral History Theory*: oral history is research through interviewing *"a living witness in in-depth conversation about the past"*. In the case of the Jacob Geel project, it was important to ask questions about the artworks and creation of it, but also about the lives of the residents.

Interviews have the unique characteristic of creating new sources rather than solely analysing existing ones. As Alessandro Portelli observes, an interview is a *"cocreated narrative between subjects— the interviewer and the interviewee"* (Portelli 2018, 239). In *Theorising the Artist Interview* (Farinati 2024), interviewing is described as a "*co-construction*: *the result of interaction between interviewer and interviewee"* (Farinati 2024, 6). Conservator Sanneke Stigter highlights in her article on the artwork interview within this publication that interviews contribute to articulating the meaning and context of an artwork. Moreover, the interview itself can even become part of the preservation and conservation process, collaboratively shaped by those participating in the exchange (Stigter 2024, 75). This perspective positions interviewing as inherently co-creative, both in its methodology and its outcomes.

How do the core values of co-creation, equity, reciprocity, empowerment, and belonging—as articulated by the Amsterdam Museum—manifest in the practice of interviewing?

Portelli (2018) describes the oral history interview as a *"mutual, personal encounter based on some form of reciprocity"* (p. 239), and as an *"experiment in equality"* (p. 243).[3] He further connects this practice to the value of empowerment, noting that interviews provide an opportunity, for previously unheard voices, *"not only to answer our questions but also to volunteer stories of their own"*(p. 243). Empowerment, reciprocity, and equity are also identified as inherent values in *Theorising the Artist Interview.* Interviewing "*dismantles old hierarchies in favour of valuing dialogue and collaboration"* (Farinati, introduction). This brings us to the concept of 'belonging', which holds particular significance in interviewing—particularly in oral history, where individuals are often chosen because they belong to a specific community or group. While this value may be less prominent in artist interviews, it can take on a more central role when engaging with stakeholders in a co-creation project. The act of conducting an interview can itself be regarded as a means of maintaining an ongoing relationship.

Interviewing Co-creators of the Jacob Geel project

To gain insight into the perspectives of various stakeholders, I conducted nine in-depth interviews with residents, artists, and museum staff. Four interviews were held with residents—including one joint interview with a mother and her child, both of whom were co-creators—three with artists, and two with museum staff involved in the project. Two of the residents had prior experience with artistic work, either professionally or through their own creative practice.[4]

The interviews consisted mainly of open-ended questions, many of which were adapted from *The Artist Interview* (Beerkens, 2012). For residents and artists, additional questions about their lives were included. Interviewees were also asked how they became involved in the project and what roles they played. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed; the transcriptions were subsequently approved by the interviewees. Interviews took place at locations convenient for the interviewees, such as their homes, studios, or the Amsterdam Museum office. Each interview lasted between one and one and a half hours. In particular, the interviews with residents and artists resembled oral history interviews, with additional time devoted to discussing their lives and (artistic) practices, as this was the moment to gain a broader context.[5]

Co-creative Values in the Jacob Geel Project

The Jacob Geel Project was one of the Amsterdam Museum's earlier co-creation initiatives, carried out prior to the publication of *Collecting the City* in 2022, which introduced the museum's co-creation methodology. Since the method was not yet formalised, the interview questions did not explicitly address the four core values. Instead, insights emerged from more general questions such as: 'What did you create?', 'What did the project mean to you?', and 'How did you work together?' Often, multiple values were reflected within a single response. For example, the following quote from an interview with Resident 1 encompasses all four values:

> *"You are one of the crew [equity and belonging]. The reason I kept participating in the project is that I discovered so many things, not just about the neighbours, but also about myself" [reciprocity and empowerment].*

Equity

In the interviews it becomes clear that the aim for equity was realised within the project, while acknowledging that everyone has their own positionality. Museum staff member 2 states: "*Okay, we are equal collaboration partners in this, but you both really do have different interests*". Resident 3 mentions: "*I find it really, really special and beautiful that you are completely involved in that project*". The combination of equity and belonging is also found in what museum staff member 1 tells: "*That we are also there [in the neighbourhood], that we [show that we] are involved, and that their stories matter for the Amsterdam Museum... Together, we have worked really hard*".

Empowerment

Different forms of empowerment emerged from the interview responses; therefore, diverse concepts are presented here to distinguish them:

Ownership

"Everyone who was there felt a little bit like an owner [of the project]". This quote from resident 4, refers strongly to the definition of empowerment as used by the Amsterdam Museum, in which the expression of the joint strength of the co-creators is central. Other forms of empowerment are linked with reciprocity. They express what the interviewee gained by joining in the project.

Proudness and recognition are found in diverse answers of residents: Resident 1: "*It felt like we were important, right?"* [Resident 2 nods enthusiastically]. Resident 3 tells: *"Yes, you're proud that you're represented there. And, you know, that people listen to you— that's, of course, very nice".* Resident 5 mentions: *"The artists said to me: 'We think the things you create are impressive'".*

Learning

Four interviewees (residents, artists, and museum staff) described the project as a valuable learning experience, which can be interpreted as embodying both empowerment and reciprocity. Artist 1 **says:** *"As a person, in my career, in all aspects of my life, it has enriched me too. How do you say that? I've also grown as a person because of it"*. Resident 5 states: *"For me, in some aspects, it was a process of observation and learning".*

Healing
At least one resident stated that the project served as a healing process during a challenging period. The healing process can be understood as a form of empowerment. Resident 1: *"This project has honestly softened the blow [of demolition and relocation] quite a bit"*.

Belonging
Both residents and artists expressed they felt more connected to the neighbourhood through the co-creation project, and also to the co-creation team of Jacob Geel. Resident 4 tells: *"For me, it was a way to connect more with the people. That was the most important thing"*. He found a new apartment nearby and benefits now from the connections he made through his participation. Resident 3 felt a deeper compassion for her neighbours: "*And then you think, well, there are always stories about how people lived, but you never visited them you know? So, for me, it really had an impact to see [their apartments] in the Jacob Geel Museum*". Resident 1 expresses her belonging to the team: "*you are one of the crew*". The artists involved mention how their own sense of belonging to the neighbourhood and the team grew during the course of the project, and what that means for them regarding the future. Artist 1: "*So we tried to become part of the Hemsterhuisstraat in the Jacob Geel neighbourhood. At a certain point, we knew everyone, just by being there often enough*". Artist 2: "*We built such strong personal relationships with people that it's very challenging not to maintain contact with all those people, all the time. Those relationships exist, [although] it's invisible, and those connections are there, and I think they won't easily go away*".

Reciprocity
The fact that the participants experienced learning, healing, recognition and ownership suggests that they gained by working together. It shows that there was reciprocity in the project, but it is not mentioned in a purely transactional sense. Artist 2: "*It's not about participation; it's about exchange. You create something together*". In the Jacob Geel Museum in Amsterdam New West, visitors were invited to interact in the former residents' apartments, and therefore could also experience the values of reciprocity and belonging. Artist 3 explains: "[*In one of the apartments people could visit], we asked them to take a piece of the floor covering with them. By doing so, the public helped to clear out the apartment of one of the leaving residents, thus sharing both the work and the bitter pain felt by the resident who had to leave*".

In summary, the co-creators frequently offered examples that illustrated the realisation of co-creation's core values, even though they were not explicitly prompted to address these values during the interviews. While all three groups—museum staff, residents, and artists—reflected on experiencing these values, they did so in distinct ways. Museum staff described a learning process in how to implement a co-creation project; one resident referred to it as "*a process of observation and learning*" in the development and presentation of his work; and an artist noted that the project enabled him to take new steps in his practice and contributed to personal growth. In this way, the project exemplifies the Amsterdam Museum's co-creation values in various dimensions. I argue that conducting in-depth interviews using the Artist Interview method is a suitable approach for retrospectively assessing whether these co-creation values were upheld throughout a co-creative project.

The Value of Creating

To identify which phase of the co-creation process was most valued, participants were asked to evaluate five stages: project initiation, creating objects and stories, the exhibition in the neighbourhood, the presentation at the Amsterdam Museum, and final reflections. Overall, responses were highly positive across all stakeholder groups, with the majority rating their experience as very positive or positive. Neutral or slightly critical responses—related to uncertainties at the start or dissatisfaction with the exhibition design—were evenly spread among residents, artists, and museum staff. No negative ratings were given. The phase 'Creating objects and stories' stood out, receiving the highest scores from both residents and artists. While some residents collaborated closely with artists, others created objects independently. All works were included in the final group presentations. Regardless of the form of participation, the creative process itself was deeply valued. Museum staff, less directly involved in this stage, gave it comparatively lower ratings.

The creation phase of a co-creation project—whether undertaken individually or collaboratively—is a process that merits closer attention. This stage can be further illuminated through co-creator interviews, as these offer an opportunity to articulate and make the creation process more visible. One of the residents who created objects that were exhibited at both locations expressed that he was less satisfied with the display at the Amsterdam Museum. The reason was that one object had been positioned differently, and a small but significant element was lost during transport—substantially diminishing the object's meaning (Figures 3 & 4).[6] In the in-

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terview, he explained the relevancy of the element and the placing in the room, thus articulating the object and the installation of it in a space. The questions from the artist interview were useful to better understand his creation and were therefore helpful in articulating the voice of an individual participant making a creation within a co-creation process.[7]





Figure 3 (left). *Saw, by Hadi Tehrani, in the Jacob Geel Museum in the neighbourhood:* Amsterdam, April 2021. Photograph by: Amsterdam Museum.

Figure 4 (right). *Saw in the Amsterdam Museum exhibition. The small green plastic leaf in the middle of the branch is lacking here. The hanging is high and coming from the wall, instead of low and with the handle towards the audience:* Amsterdam, August 2022. Photograph by: Amsterdam Museum.

Another resident who had made an object also discovered that some small parts were missing. He expressed in the interview the meaning of this loss. All materials he used in the work came from the streets in the Jacob Geel area, just before the area was broken down, when people were doing away with parts of their household belongings. These materials were no longer available and replacing them with alternatives would have diminished the significance of the object. The interview revealed the importance these materials held for the maker. In addition, it offered a first step towards jointly exploring a solution to this loss through dialogue during the conversation. (Figures 5, 6, and 7).



Figure 5. *'Retablo', by Mehrdad Rahimi, as presented in the Jacob Geel Museum in the neighbourhood:* Amsterdam, April 2021. Photograph by: Amsterdam Museum.





Figure 6 (top). *Detail with the bycicle:* Amsterdam, April 2021. Photograph by: Amsterdam Museum.

Figure 7 (bottom). *The same detail in the exhibition in the Amsterdam Museum. The missing red parts of the bycicle were rescued, but the black front tire, made of an earring found in the Jacob Geel area, is lost:* Amsterdam, August 2022. Photograph by: Amsterdam Museum.

The examples from the interviews highlight the equal importance of properly presenting and preserving artistic works—both in the case of individual professional artworks and those created within co-creation projects. Professional artists are (or have become) more experienced in articulating how their work should be displayed and treated. However, to ensure equity and balance in co-creation projects, it is essential to engage explicitly in dialogue with co-creators on these matters. Conducting interviews with co-creators can be a valuable tool in this process. Conservators Jane Henderson and Tanya Nakamoto, in *Dialogue in Conservation Decision-Making* (2016), examined cases involving decision-making with diverse stakeholders. Their research revealed that shared decision-making was more commonly applied to matters of heritage appraisal and use—whether for display or storage—than to conservation treatment decisions, even in cases with clearly defined stakeholder involvement.

The Future of the 'Jacob Geel' Stories and Objects

Questions regarding the future of the co-creations included: What would you like to happen to the objects and to the (recorded) stories? Which of the project's creations do you consider most important for a future exhibition on Jacob Geel? In many cases, the stories and objects were strongly interconnected, forming a single, inseparable creation. In addition, stories were presented in audio tours in the presentations. However, asking about stories separately from objects revealed differing perspectives on their accessibility, ownership, and future use.

Stories

Residents reflecting on what should be done with the recorded stories expressed a desire for archiving them to ensure future access. Resident 2, the youngest interviewee, shared: *"Keep it so I can listen to it again when I am old, and that new generations can hear it*". The artists acknowledged the ongoing effort required for (digital) preservation, emphasising the need to *"transfer, transfer, and transfer it again to keep it accessible"*. Additionally, there is a suggestion to keep the stories in the Amsterdam City Archives, as its primary function is to preserve and provide access to digitised information. Museum staff highlighted the importance of maintaining accessibility within a museum context, aligning with the institution's policy of collecting stories as part of its broader collection.[8]

Objects in the near and the distant Future

The co-creators expressed varying perspectives on the future of the objects. Unlike stories, which can be shared widely in digital form, physical objects exist in a single location, complicating decisions about their future. Some of the residents indicated that they want to keep their objects at home, while others were open to the museum holding onto them, with the condition that they can reclaim them if the museum no longer wishes to keep them. The participating artists believe that ownership should remain with the residents, with the museum acting as a borrower, both for the residents' objects and the portraits created by the artists. Artist 2 emphasises that keeping objects in residents' homes adds value, as their context is significant. Following the project's presentations, the museum temporarily placed the objects in storage as loans from the co-creators, ensuring their safekeeping for a planned future exhibition showcasing multiple co-creation projects.

To determine which objects should be included in a future exhibition on *Jacob Geel*, interviewees were asked about what they thought would be meaningful to display. Some of the stories and certain objects were highlighted, including a front door of one of the Jacob Geel neighbourhood apartments—a collaborative artwork involving public interaction (Figures 8&9). This door was specifically mentioned by an artist and two museum staff members as an object that could be preserved in the museum's collection. By consulting all co-creation stakeholders on what they consider significant, a curated list of essential objects can be created, whether they remain within the museum or elsewhere. [9]

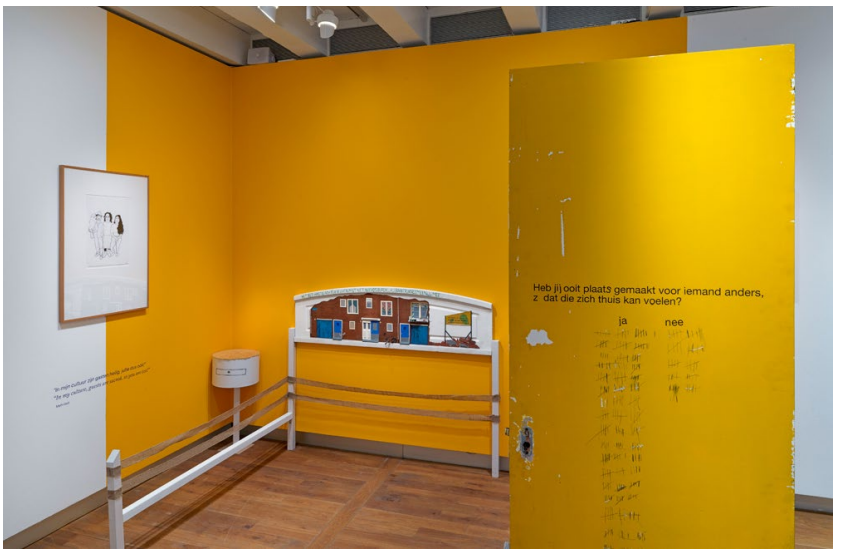


Figure 8. *Retablo and door in the Amsterdam Museum:* Amsterdam, 2022. Photograph by: Amsterdam Museum.

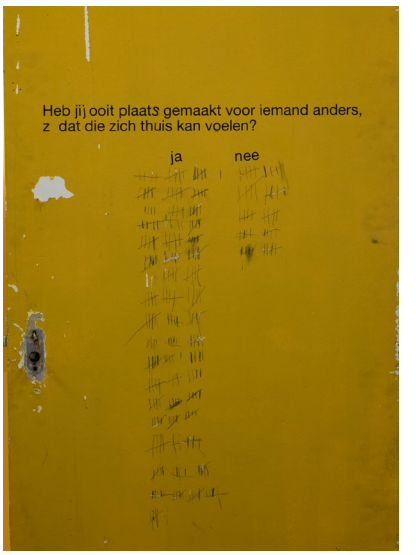


Figure 8. *Retablo and door in the Amsterdam Museum:* Amsterdam, 2022. Photograph by: Amsterdam Museum.

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When asked about the long-term future of the objects, interviewees often expressed views that differed from their thoughts on the near future. Resident 4 suggested that, over time, it might be best to store the objects in the museum's depot. The maker of the saw, Hadi, mentioned that he might migrate in the future and would like to keep some of his work. However, he felt that the saw (Figures 3 and 4) should remain in Amsterdam, as it is deeply connected to the city. In his view, relocating the object would diminish its significance. Residents 1 and 2 reflected on what might happen in 100 years. Resident 1 envisioned the objects being rediscovered in an attic, while Resident 2 proposed burying them so that they could be unearthed like a time capsule. Resident 1 also emphasised that the Jacob Geel collection could hold meaning for future generations. By preserving these stories and objects, people facing similar challenges a century from now might find connection and solace in them.

Collections at Home and in the Museum

One of the artists acknowledged the importance of preserving meaningful objects created during the project, but also emphasised that *"when objects are part of everyday family life, they hold more value than if they are simply stored away in a museum storage"*. As a specialist in collection preservation, I found it rewarding to have informal conversations during the interviews about how to care for objects at home. For many residents, this was a new consideration, and they were open to my advice —fostering a sense of reciprocity within the co-creator interview process. During one interview, I suggested placing a colourful drawing in a darker part of the room, where the television stood, to help prevent rapid discolouration of the drawing. This sparked a humorous discussion about getting rid of the television altogether and instead enjoying the drawing as the room's a focal point. Another resident playfully suggested that he might modify his object over time, adding new elements as a surprise for the museum if it were ever exhibited again. The museum staff interviewed recognised the need to maintain contact with the residents and ensure a smooth transfer of objects to their new apartments. They acknowledged that over time, some drawings might fade faster, remarking matter-of-factly, *"Yes, that's just how it is"*.

For this part of the research, it is insightful to briefly examine how the Amsterdam Museum perceives its collection. The museum's guiding principle for its collection is *"of us"*—not in the sense that it belongs to the museum itself, but rather that it belongs to the city of Amsterdam and, by extension, belongs to all its citizens.[10] The museum is responsible for preserving and presenting a collection of over 100,000 objects on behalf

of the city. Within this framework, what is the status of these co-created objects? As museum staff member 2 reflects*: "These objects are in the city, though they may not be part of the museum's collection. Nevertheless, they remain connected to it".*

What I learned from interviewing the co-creators in this project is that if the goal is to keep objects and stories accessible to the museum and future audiences, while they are kept in people's home, it is essential for the museum to maintain contact with the residents and artists. The museum can offer advice on how best to care for the objects within domestic settings. These objects may gain value over time, as more emotions and stories become attached to them while they are part of everyday life—and they may also change, probably more than they would in museum storage. As conservators Farideh Fekrsanati and Helia Marcal (2022, 134) state: Reciprocity is not only *"about access, parity in decision-making processes, or the co-production of conservation as a social activity, but it also relates to a continuous engagement and the development of consistent and meaningful relationships".*

Conclusions

In this article, I aimed to explore whether interviewing co-creators using the artist interview as a framework serves as an effective approach to engage in dialogue about both the works resulting from a co-creation project and the co-creation process itself. Interviews with co-creators from the Jacob Geel project suggest that the Amsterdam Museum's core values of co-creation were embedded in the Jacob Geel project. These values align with concepts found in artist interview and oral history interview methodologies. The interviews offer a window into the perspectives of various stakeholders throughout different project phases and contribute valuable input for shaping future co-creation practices.

Interviewing is not a neutral act; both the interviewer and the interviewee—as well as the interviewer's background and the context in which questions are posed—influence the dynamics of the exchange, making it a critical and reflective practice. More than a tool for evaluation, the interview is inherently co-creative and co-constructive. It not only offers insight into the creators' intentions and expectations, but also serves as a process through which the future of co-created outcomes is actively shaped. In this way, the interview phase should not be viewed as merely retrospective, but as an integral part of the co-creation process itself—one that reinforces its continuous and evolving nature. In my role as a collection and preservation specialist, I was not actively involved in the exhibition

phase of the Jacob Geel Project, but I am a natural partner in its afterlife. The questions I bring to the artist/co-creator interview are inevitably shaped by the museum's responsibilities around object care and the preservation of meaningful legacies.

In future research on co-creative projects, several approaches can be considered and further explored. Conducting interviews with two interviewers from diverse backgrounds may broaden the perspective of the interview —a practice sometimes used in artist interviews. The term 'maker interview' or 'co-creator interview' can be broadened and deepened through further research on the methodology of interviewing participants with a diversity in backgrounds. The valuations of the project by co-creators themselves could be researched in addition to studying the realisation of the Amsterdam Museum's co-creation values, in order to gain more understanding of their personal thought processes and values. Further explorations could involve group interviews or collective assessments to identify key elements for collecting with stakeholders and the most effective methods for implementation. Additionally, I recommend incorporating considerations for the 'post-exhibition' phase, from the outset, in the project design. This approach recognises the time, costs, and sustained relationships necessary to support the ongoing lifecycle of the tangible and intangible results of co-creation projects, turning them into continuing co-creation processes.

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Endnotes

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2 When the artists were commissioned by the museum for the project, they made contact with residents, which was a challenge since the project was executed during Covid-19 pandemic. The name of the Jacob Geel neigbourhood, derives from Jacob Geel (1789-1862), a Dutch philologist. 'Geel' means 'yellow' in Dutch, hence the yellow elements in both exhibition designs.

3 Portelli describes equality as follows: "meaning exactly this: speaking to each other not as if the difference (often in terms of status, class, power) did not exist, but rather recognizing it and endeavoring to communicate across and beyond, prefiguring a utopian world in which difference may not mean inequality" (Portelli 2018, 243). This interpretation closely aligns with the value of equity as expressed by the Amsterdam Museum.

4 I have interviewed approximately one third of the residents and half of the artists who were actively involved in the project. The artists do not always identify solely as artists; some refer to themselves as storytellers, makers, or use other terms. In this research, I use the terms 'artists' and 'residents' to distinguish between their different roles, although everyone in the project participated as a maker or co-creator.

5 Transcription was done with different automated transcription systems and afterwards relistened and corrected by hand. The interviewees all gave their consent to the interviews by subscribing a form. The quotes are translated from Dutch in English, with the aid of ChatGPT to remain close to the text in Dutch.

6 In this project, the transport of the objects was not executed by professional art handlers or museum staff of the collection management department.

7 In this case, the form of presentation was reflected on after the exhibion was held, during the interview. But

it is better to have dialogues and agreements on how to present objects before designing exhibitions. As this is one of the first co-creations projects, this was part of a learning process on how to work together through all stages of the project.

8 Some of the recordings are online: hart.amsterdam/nl/page/1299727/jacob-geel-museum (in Dutch).

9 The practice of *co-collecting*, in which diverse stakeholders collaboratively decide what enters or exits a museum's collection, is becoming increasingly common in heritage organisations and was conducted by the Amsterdam Museum in different acquisition projects. This practice reflects the 'Convention on Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro Convention) 2005' of the Council of Europe, in which is stated that cultural heritage objects and places are important "*because of the meanings and uses that people attach to them and the values they represent*", see https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/faro-convention. The Netherlands signed the Convention in 2024. Information, toolkits and initiatives for The Netherlands and Flanders can be found on: https://faro.cultureelerfgoed.nl/groups/30-waarderen-van-erfgoed/welcome (in Dutch).

10 See for more information: amsterdammuseum.nl/en/about-us.